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**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH REMINDS PARENTS TO  
MAKE THEIR HOMES “LEAD SAFE”**

(RICHMOND, Va.)— In response to recent concerns about lead poisoning in children, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) wishes to remind parents to take precautions against lead exposure at home.

Elevated blood lead levels affect an estimated 13,800 children under age 6 in Virginia. The primary source is dust from lead-based paint in many of Virginia's 1.8 million homes built before 1978.

“Children under age 6 are most vulnerable to lead poisoning,” said Nancy Van Voorhis, director of Lead Safe Virginia. Lead interferes with normal brain development and is associated with permanently reduced IQ, learning disabilities and behavioral disorders.

**Is Your Child at Risk?**

Parents who think their child may be at risk for lead exposure should contact their health care provider. The health care professional can perform a blood test to see whether the child has been exposed to lead. Children at risk for exposure should be tested, even if they appear healthy. Most children with elevated blood lead levels do not have any symptoms. However, there is no safe level of lead in blood. As blood lead levels increase, lead has a larger effect on children's learning and behavior. A blood lead test is the only way you can tell if your child has an elevated lead level.

Some older Virginia homes have lead pipes, solder, brass fixtures, and valves which can allow lead to leach into tap water. It's important to note that exposure to lead through drinking water is less common than ingesting lead-based paint and lead contaminated dust. People can significantly reduce their exposure to lead in drinking water by running the faucet for 60 to 90 seconds if the home water supply has been idle for more than six hours.

Imported jewelry and toys may not follow the same strict guidelines as required in the United States and therefore may contain high levels of lead. As a precaution, parents should be sure to keep all small metal objects that might be swallowed (such as jewelry, charms and toys) away from young children, especially infants and toddlers who often place such objects in their mouths.

Other sources of lead poisoning may be related to:

- Hobbies (making stained-glass windows).

(more)

- Work (recycling or making automobile batteries).
- Home health remedies (azarcon and greta, which are used for upset stomach or indigestion; pay-loo-ah, which is used for rash or fever).
- Certain imported herbs and spices.
- Some imported mini blinds.

### **How to make your home “Lead Safe.”**

Simple steps that parents can take to protect their children from lead exposure include:

- Wash children's hands before eating, bedtime and naptime and after playing.
- Wash children's bottles, pacifiers and favorite toys at least daily.
- Make sure children eat a nutritious, well-balanced diet.
- Clean floors, windowsills and other surfaces at least weekly, using wet cleaning methods.
- Wipe soil off shoes before entering house.
- Repair surfaces with peeling or chipping paint.
- Take precautions to avoid exposure to lead dust when remodeling or renovating. Don't use a belt-sander, propane torch, dry scraper or dry sandpaper on painted surfaces that may contain lead. Use lead-safe work practices when performing any remodeling activity if the dwelling was built before 1978.
- Keep all small metal objects that might be swallowed (such as jewelry, charms, and toys) away from young children, especially infants and toddlers who often place such objects in their mouths.

VDH's Lead Safe Virginia program offers families a “New Parent Kit” lead poisoning prevention brochure which outlines things parents can do to protect their children against lead poisoning. For a copy of the brochure, download it from [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov) or contact Lead Safe Virginia at (877) 668-7987. Residents can also learn more about lead poisoning prevention by calling Virginia Poison Control at (800) 222-1222.

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